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BLACK HARVEST
by JOSH HOWARD
REPENT

BLACK HARVEST

by JOSH HOWARD
Lettered by STEVE SEELEY

In the small town of Jericho, Texas, a yearly phenomenon known as the Jericho Lights brings tourists and UFO enthusiasts from miles around. In the last days of fall, the lights appear in the skies just outside of town, and remain for 6 days before vanishing again. Although the true cause of the mysterious lights remains a mystery, they've become a deeply rooted part of Jericho's history.

But this year, something else returns to Jericho, and nothing will ever be the same.

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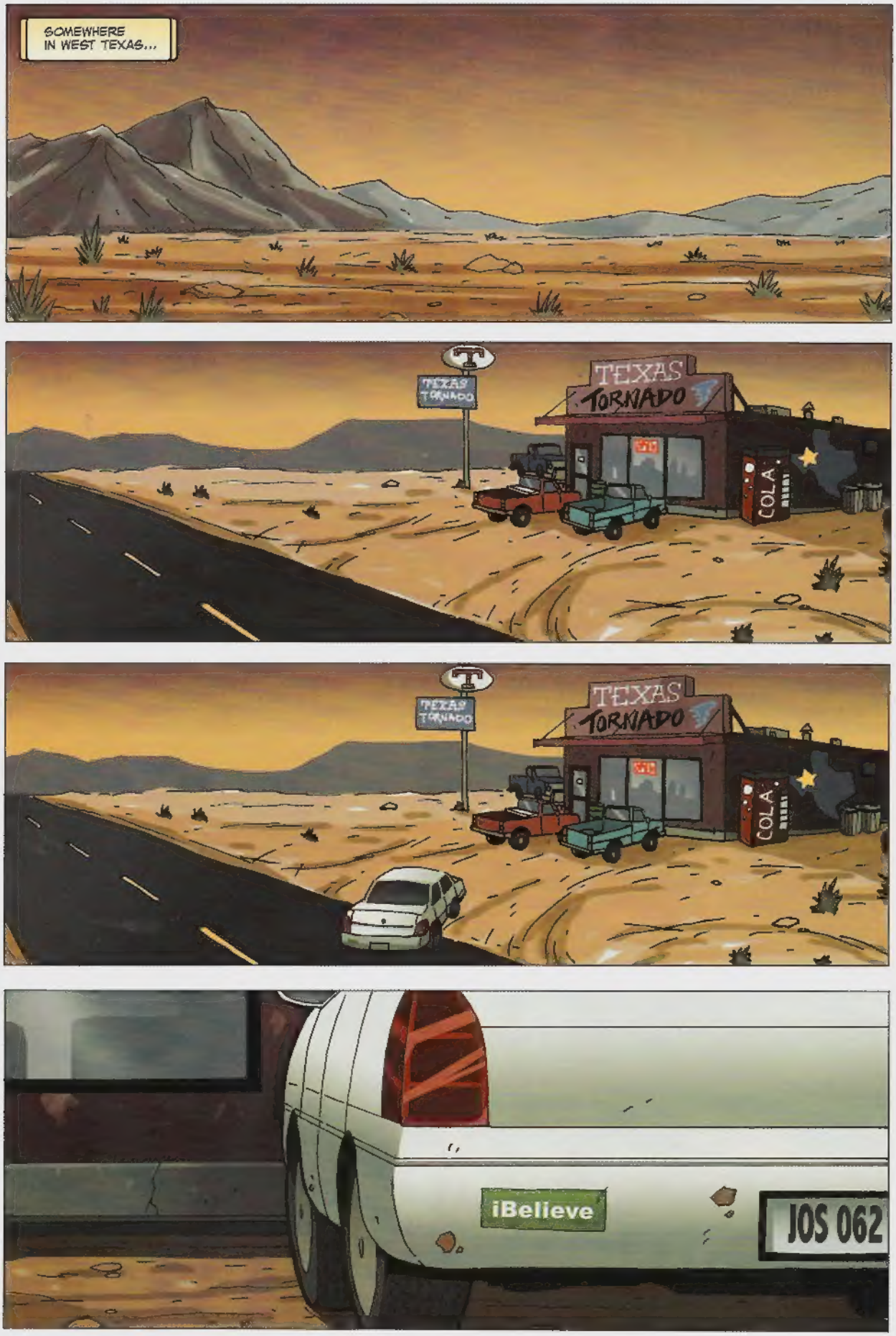

SOMEWHERE IN WEST TEXAS...
TEXAS TORNADO
TEXAS TORNADO
COLA
TEXAS TORNADO
TEXAS TORNADO
COLA
iBelieve
JOS 062

DAMN IT.
SLAM!
BEE

UM...I'M KINDA LOST. COULD I MAYBE GET SOME DIRECTIONS?

YOU'LL HAVE TO *BUY* SOMETHIN' FIRST.

WHAT?

YOU KNOW HOW MANY OUT-OF-TOWNERS WE GET COMIN' THROUGH HERE WANTIN' DIRECTIONS?

NO.

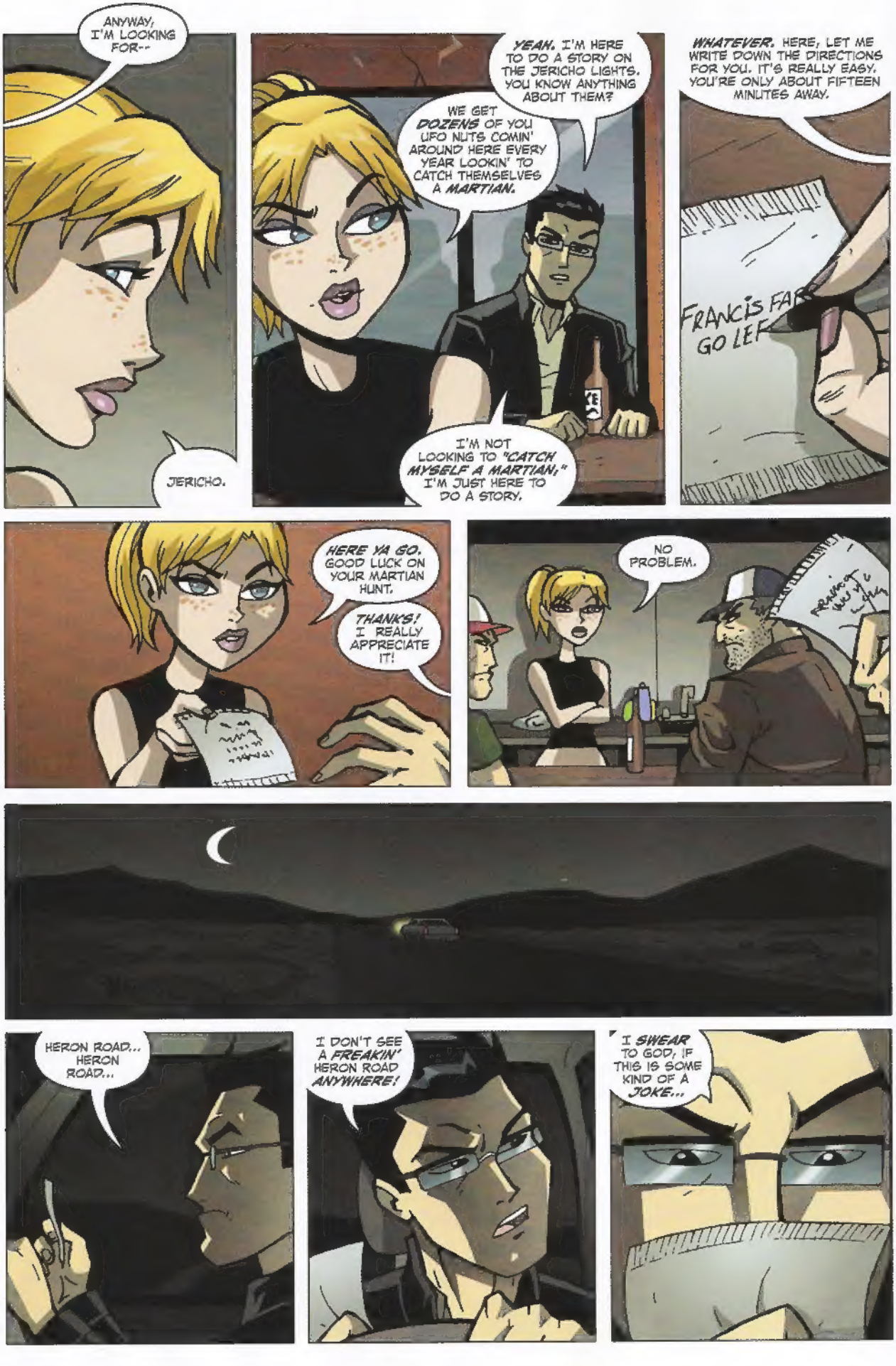
A LOT. NOW, SIT DOWN, ORDER SOMETHIN', AND WE'LL TRY TO GET YOU WHERE YOU'RE GOIN'.
HEY.

SO, WHAT'LL IT BE? WE'VE GOT GREAT SOUTHWEST NACHOS. GOES GREAT WITH A SHINER, OR MAYBE A JACK AND COKE? WE'VE ALSO--
HOW ABOUT JUST A COKE.

CLONK!

SO, WHERE YOU FROM, BIG SPENDER?
FLIK!

DALLAS.
WHAT'RE YA DOIN' ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?
I'M A REPORTER.
WHAT PAPER?
"EYES ON THE SKY," AND IT'S NOT REALLY A PAPER, IT'S A BLOG.
"eyes on the sky"
WHAT THE HELL'S A BLOG?
YOU KNOW, A WEB LOG?
LIKE ON THE INTERNET.
GROSS! YOU MEAN LIKE PORNO?
NO! NO! I WRITE ABOUT UFO'S, THE PARANORMAL, THE UNKNOWN... STUFF LIKE THAT.

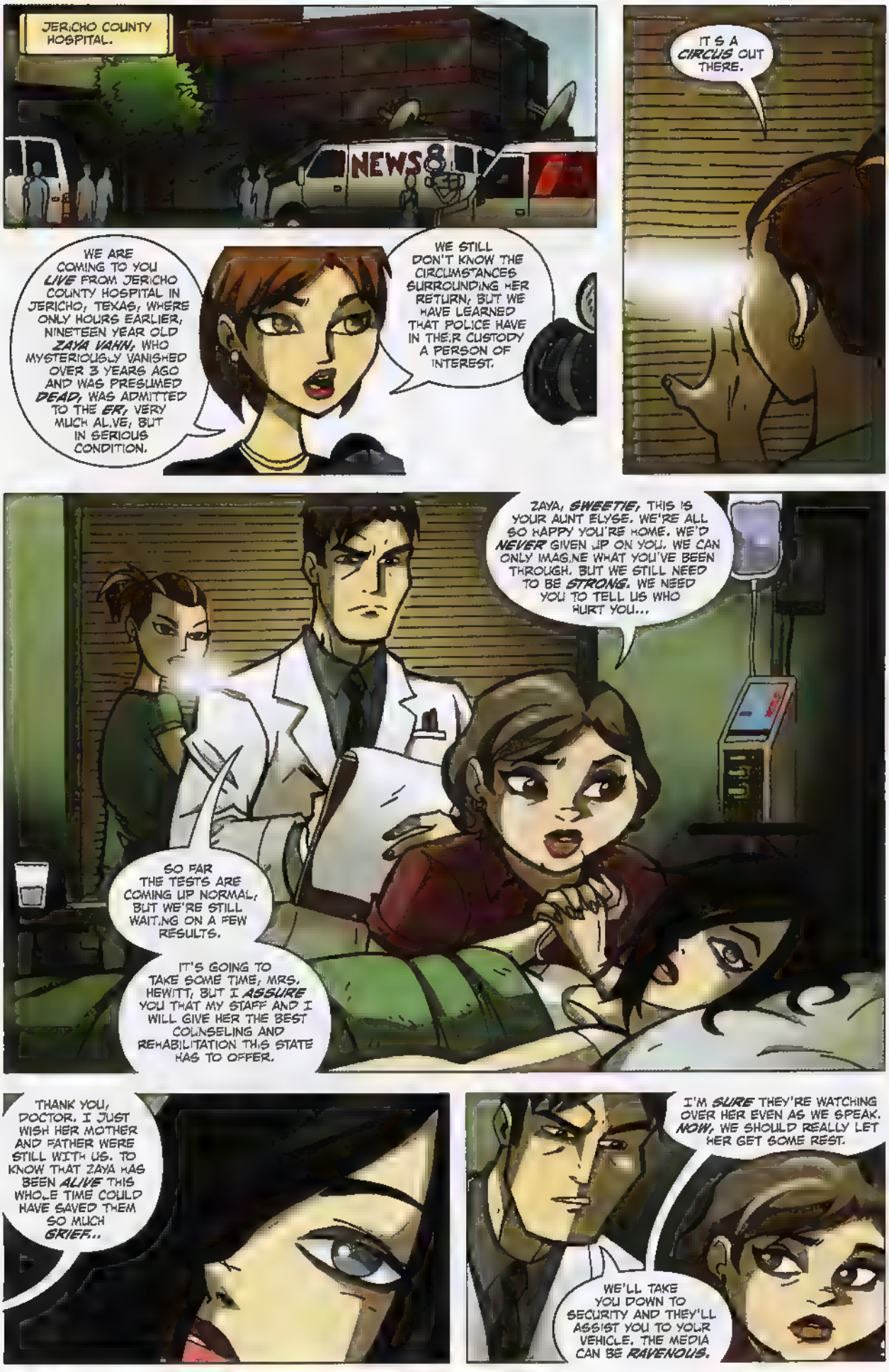

ANYWAY, I'M LOOKING FOR--
JERICHO.
YEAH. I'M HERE TO DO A STORY ON THE JERICHO LIGHTS. YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THEM?
WE GET DOZENS OF YOU UFO NUTS COMIN' AROUND HERE EVERY YEAR LOOKIN' TO CATCH THEMSELVES A MARTIAN.
I'M NOT LOOKING TO "CATCH MYSELF A MARTIAN." I'M JUST HERE TO DO A STORY.
WHATEVER. HERE, LET ME WRITE DOWN THE DIRECTIONS FOR YOU. IT'S REALLY EASY. YOU'RE ONLY ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AWAY.
FRANCIS FAR
GO LEF
HERE YA GO. GOOD LUCK ON YOUR MARTIAN HUNT.
THANKS! I REALLY APPRECIATE IT!
NO PROBLEM.
HERON ROAD... HERON ROAD...
I DON'T SEE A FREAKIN' HERON ROAD ANYWHERE!
I SWEAR TO GOD, IF THIS IS SOME KIND OF A JOKE...

SCREEEECH!!
OH, SH--!!
KA-THUD!
OMIGOD, OMIGOD! I KILLED HER!
HEY! ARE YOU OKAY? PLEASE TELL ME YOU'RE OKAY!
OH, MY GOD, I'M SO SORRY! I DIDN'T SEE--

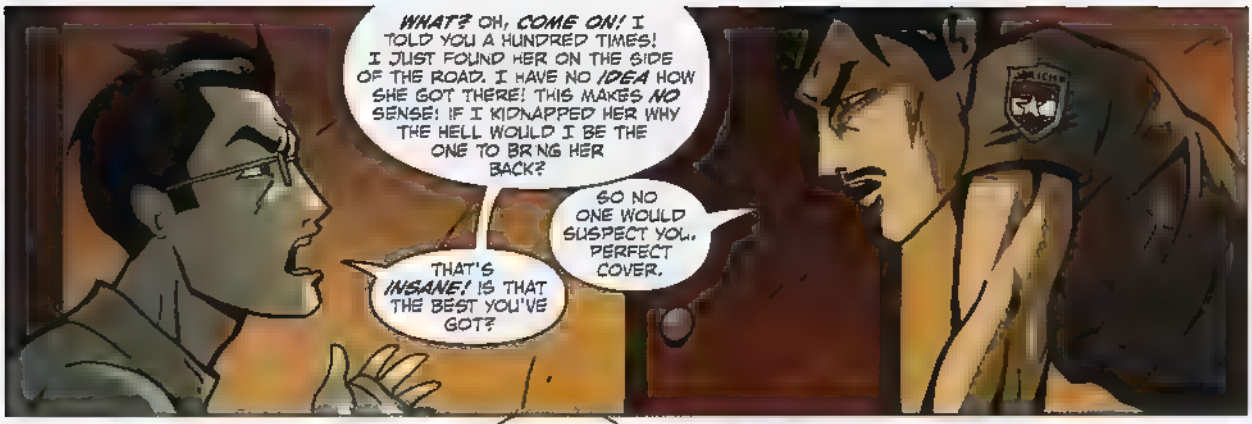
HEY, WAIT! LET ME HELP YOU!
UM, WHOOPS. DIDN'T--
REPENT
MY GOD, WHAT SICK BASTARD DID THIS TO YOU?
HERE. IT'S OKAY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING. WE JUST NEED TO GET YOU TO A HOSPITAL.
GOD, YOU'RE BURNING UP. YOUR SKIN FEELS LIKE IT'S ON FIRE!
HERE.
DRINK THIS. IT'LL HELP. NO? WELL, IT'S HERE IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.

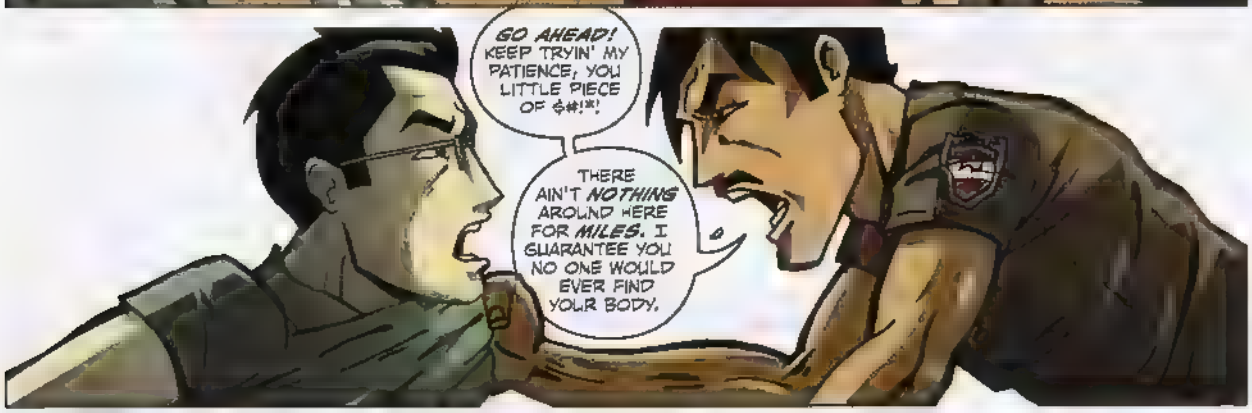
SO... YOU GOT A NAME?
ZAYA.
ZAYA! THAT'S A NICE NAME. I'M DANIEL. EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT, I PROMISE.
welcome to
jericho
Home of the jericho fights
HEY, JESSICA, LISTEN. I M IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETH NG BIG DOWN HERE.
NO, NO. I CAN'T REALLY TALK ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW. I JUST NEED YOU TO TAKE OVER THE WEBSITE FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS.
PLEASE. I'LL CALL YOU AND FILL YOU IN AS SOON AS THINGS SETTLE DOWN AND I GET SOME REST. YEAH, I PROMISE. THANKS, JESSICA.
I OWE YOU ONE.
ANY NEWS YET?
SIR, PLEASE. JUST HAVE A SEAT. WE'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN WE KNOW SOMETHING.

ZZZZZZ
SIR.
SIR!
I'M SHERIFF BANKS. TH S IS DEPUTY VASQUEZ.
I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE THE ONE WHO BROUGHT IN THE VAHN GIRL.
UM... YEAH.
YOU'LL NEED TO COME WITH US, YOUNG MAN.
WE NEED TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS.
MEEP
MEEP
MEEP
911
ALRIGHT ALREADY!
YEAH, WHAT IS IT? WHAT? ARE YOU SURE? I'M ON MY WAY.
WHAT IS IT?
ZAYA VAHN.


JERICHO COUNTY HOSPITAL.
NEWS 8
WE ARE COMING TO YOU LIVE FROM JERICHO COUNTY HOSPITAL IN JERICHO, TEXAS, WHERE ONLY HOURS EARLIER, NINETEEN YEAR OLD ZAYA VAHN, WHO MYSTERIOUSLY VANISHED OVER 3 YEARS AGO AND WAS PRESUMED DEAD, WAS ADMITTED TO THE ER, VERY MUCH ALIVE, BUT IN SERIOUS CONDITION.
WE STILL DON'T KNOW THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING HER RETURN, BUT WE HAVE LEARNED THAT POLICE HAVE IN THEIR CUSTODY A PERSON OF INTEREST.
IT'S A CIRCUS OUT THERE.
ZAYA, SWEETIE, THIS IS YOUR AUNT ELYSE. WE'RE ALL SO HAPPY YOU'RE HOME. WE'D NEVER GIVEN UP ON YOU. WE CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH. BUT WE STILL NEED TO BE STRONG. WE NEED YOU TO TELL US WHO HURT YOU...
SO FAR THE TESTS ARE COMING UP NORMAL, BUT WE'RE STILL WAITING ON A FEW RESULTS.
IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME TIME, MRS. HEWITT, BUT I ASSURE YOU THAT MY STAFF AND I WILL GIVE HER THE BEST COUNSELING AND REHABILITATION THIS STATE HAS TO OFFER.
THANK YOU, DOCTOR. I JUST WISH HER MOTHER AND FATHER WERE STILL WITH US. TO KNOW THAT ZAYA HAS BEEN ALIVE THIS WHOLE TIME COULD HAVE SAVED THEM SO MUCH GRIEF..
I'M SURE THEY'RE WATCHING OVER HER EVEN AS WE SPEAK. NOW, WE SHOULD REALLY LET HER GET SOME REST.
WE'LL TAKE YOU DOWN TO SECURITY AND THEY'LL ASSIST YOU TO YOUR VEHICLE. THE MEDIA CAN BE RAVENOUS.

I NEED YOU TO RESTRICT HER ACCESS.
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT? IF THE MEDIA GETS WIND OF IT--
I DON'T CARE. JUST DO IT! KEEP HER OUT OF THE LOOP!
JERICHO POLICE
IT'S ABOUT DAMN TIME.
YOU CAN'T JUST HOLD ME HERE LIKE THIS WITHOUT GOOD CAUSE! I'VE ANSWERED ALL YOUR QUESTIONS.
SHUT THE HELL UP!
THIS AIN'T THE BIG CITY. WE DO THINGS OUR WAY OUT HERE!
I DON'T CARE HOW BACKWARDS THIS TOWN IS, THIS IS STILL AMERICA. I HAVE RIGHTS!
YOU AIN'T GOT NO RIGHTS, BOY.
NOT AFTER YOU TOOK THAT POOR GIRL, CUT HER UP AND HAD YOUR WAY WITH HER.


WHAT? OH, COME ON! I TOLD YOU A HUNDRED TIMES! I JUST FOUND HER ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW SHE GOT THERE! THIS MAKES NO SENSE! IF I KIDNAPPED HER WHY THE HELL WOULD I BE THE ONE TO BRING HER BACK?
SO NO ONE WOULD SUSPECT YOU. PERFECT COVER.
THAT'S INSANE! IS THAT THE BEST YOU'VE GOT?


GO AHEAD! KEEP TRYIN' MY PATIENCE, YOU LITTLE PIECE OF $#!%!
THERE AIN'T NOTHING AROUND HERE FOR MILES. I GUARANTEE YOU NO ONE WOULD EVER FIND YOUR BODY.

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT. SETTLE DOWN, SON.

YOU'RE FREE TO GO, MR. WEBSTER. GO WRITE ABOUT YOUR MART ANS, OR WHATEVER IT IS YOU SAY YOU'RE DOIN' HERE, BUT YOU'RE NOT TO LEAVE TOWN, YOU UNDERSTAND?
WE'RE NOT FINISHED WITH YOU.

JERICHO COUNTY HOSPITAL.
NEWS8

SHIFT OVER ALREADY?
HEY, I JUST PULLED A DOUBLE! I'M NOT STICKING AROUND HERE ANY LONGER THAN I HAVE TO, ESPECIALLY WITH ALL THE CRAZINESS GOING ON.
I HEAR YOU. HAD TO HAVE SECURITY ESCORT ME INTO THE BUILDING. REPORTERS NEARLY TORE ME APART OUT THERE. BE CAREFUL ON YOUR WAY OUT.
I THINK I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
SUIT YOURSELF. I GOTTA GET TO WORK. SEE YOU TOMORROW.
SEE YA.
KA-THU
KARA?
KARA, IS THAT YOU?
WHONK!
AAIIEE!!

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU RE DOING?!
ARE YOU CRAZY?
AAAAHH.
CR-RASH!
YOU...YOU PSYCHO BITCH.
VENGEANCE IS COMING. JUDGMENT WITH FIRE. REPENT AND YOU MAY BE SHOWN MERCY.
GO TO HELL.

BLOOD IS ON YOUR HANDS!
THE CRIES OF THE INNOCENT WILL NOT GO UNANSWERED.
SOMEBODY HELP ME! SHE'S GOING TO KILL ME!
I AM WRATH. I AM FIRE.

AAAA

AAAA

ELSEWHERE.

STATUS REPORT.
FIRST TEST *COMPLETE*-- TARGET *PURGED*. POWER LEVELS STABILIZING, ALL SYSTEMS NORMAL. *ORDERS*, SIR?
I'VE JUST RECEIVED WORD FROM THE TOP. WE ARE TO PROCEED WITH *OPERATION: BLACK HARVEST*.
TO BE CONTINUED...

"eyes on the sky"

I knew Black Harvest was going to be a big risk from the beginning.

If I've learned anything from my relatively short time in the comic book industry, it's that you can never predict people's reactions. Things that you thought would resonate or strike a nerve with people don't, and things you never gave a second thought to end up being a pretty big deal. I was completely unprepared for the attention that Dead @ 17 received. Even as I worked on the first series, I never thought it would do well enough to warrant a sequel. Sure, I had more story to tell, but I was realistic. The comic industry is notoriously resistant to anything "new." The same companies are still putting out the same books about the same characters ever since comics began 60 years ago. I thought at best, I put this out, learn the ropes a little, and then move on to something new.

But strangely enough, before I knew it, Dead @ 17 had become something of a hit. Not by mainstream standards by any stretch of the imagination, but it was doing pretty alright for itself, considering I was an absolute nobody on an unknown title from a company no one had ever heard of (in other words, it barely broke even). So I put my other story ideas aside and began work on the sequel. It seemed in the book's best interest to keep the momentum going. I thought, "After this, I will get to all those other ideas I have floating around in my head." But popularity continued to grow and it was evident that I should probably go ahead and see the story through to its conclusion.

So, 3 mini series and 3 one shots later, I was finally at a point where I felt I could do something different. I had a barbarian story I wanted to do, a retro superhero tale, and an idea about a starship. Lots of ideas, but none of them horror. Dead @ 17 was it - that was my take on the horror genre. It had teenage girls, zombies, and demon possession. What more was there to do?

I began work on one of my other concepts, getting as far as halfway through the first issue. Then something happened. Something that doesn't happen everyday, but when it does, you grab hold of it and don't let go.

Inspiration.

It seemed a had another horror concept on my hands. Well, it seemed that way at first. As I began to (obsessively) develop it, it became clear that this was going to be just as much about sci-fi and old school religion as it was horror. I thought it made for a cool mix of ideas and concepts, so I made it my priority.

Then I began to panic. Should I jump into something horror related so soon after Dead @ 17? I wasn't sure if I was comfortable with becoming known as just a horror guy, as much as I enjoy the genre. I felt I really needed to do something completely different to show my versatility.

But I then I thought, to heck with versatility. There will be enough time for all that stuff later.

So here we are. Black Harvest #1. A new story at a new home, but still the same Dead @ 17 guy drawing cute girls and gratuitous violence in various combinations.

Thank you for picking up the first issue. I hope you'll stick around for the rest. If you liked Dead @ 17, I think you're in for some surprises. As the pretentious comic book writer cliché goes, "There will be lots of twists and turns, and no matter what you think is really going on, you're wrong."

If you didn't enjoy Dead @ 17, I can't imagine why you picked this up, unless it was out of some sense of morbid curiosity, or maybe you're just some kind of sadist. If that's the case, I hope the experience was really painful, and there's more where that came from.

See you next time,

-Josh H.

Black Harvest pin-up by Tim Seeley